STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Efforts to Restore Peace, Normalcy and Overall Socio-Economic Development in Jammu and Kashmir

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): Sir, I lay the following statement regarding the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

"As the Hon'ble Members are aware, a process of wide-ranging consultations with different sections of the people in the State of Jammu and Kashmir regarding various aspects of the situation in the State had been initiated in the form of the Round Table Conference (RTC) on Jammu and Kashmir under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Prime Minister in February, 2006. In pursuance to the 2nd RTC held at Srinagar on 24-25 May, 2006, five Working Groups were constituted to look into various aspects and recommend measures for bringing about further improvement in terms of restoration of peace and normalcy and for the overall balanced and socio-economic development of the people in the State. The reports of four of these Working Groups were presented in the 3rd RTC held in New Delhi on 24 April, 2007, which broadly endorsed the approach and recommendations made by them.

The Working Group on 'Confidence Building Measures across the segments of Society in the State' had made various recommendations, *inter-alia*, in respect of relief and rehabilitation measures for widows, orphans and other victims of militancy and violence, facilitating the return and rehabilitation of the Kashmiri migrants, issues relating to refugees of 1947 from West Pakistan in POK, etc. After examination of the recommendations, the Government has taken the following decisions:

Victims of Militancy Related Violence

In 1994, the State Government of Jammu and Kashmir evolved a special scheme for providing compassionate employment to the eligible next of kin (NoK) of victims of militancy related violence. Due to non-availability of adequate number of jobs, there is a large backlog of approved cases for such compassionate appointment. There are also a number of families where, despite relaxations in eligibility conditions, there are no members in the family eligible for employment. It was proposed by the State Government, as an exceptional measure, to offer a one-time compensation of Rs. 5 lakhs in lieu of the agreed compassionate appointment. They have sought the assistance of the Government of India for re-imbursement of the expenditure that coverage of the backlog will entail. We have agreed to the request of the State Government.

We have also agreed to the request of the State Government to provide assistance for their proposal to increase the quantum of monthly pension payable to widows under the existing scheme of the Rehabilitation Council of J & K to Rs. 750/- per month from the present level of Rs. 500/- per month. Assistance to those orphaned in militancy related violence will now cover all such children without discrimination.

Problems of Migrants of the Valley

A major issue that has plagued the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is the fact that more than 55000 families who had been forced to leave their homes in the wake of the unfortunate events in the State, continue to be away from their homes in the Kashmir Valley. There is a longstanding tradition in the State of Jammu and Kashmir of people of different faiths living together in peace and harmony. We have a collective responsibility to rectify the situation,

and to facilitate the return of these families, who are an integral part of the composite social fabric of the area and, in the process, address a major humanitarian concern that has been crying for attention over the years.

When they left the Valley, many migrant families had to resort to distress sale of their houses and properties in the Valley till legislation put a stop to it in 1997. The State Government is being requested to identify land for group housing societies of such families. The Government proposes to give these migrants families, who opt to return to the Valley, a lump sum grant of Rs. 7.5 lakh to build or buy homes through such societies.

It has also been decided to give a similar lump sum grant to migrant families whose houses have been fully or partially damaged, as well as assistance to those whose houses may not have been damaged, but may have got into disuse and dilapidation as a result of abandonment. It is proposed to assist suitably with transit accommodation and start-up expenses.

It has also been decided that the monthly relief being presently given to around 15,000 migrant families in Jammu and Delhi will be continued for such of thesse families, who may opt to return to the Valley, for a period of two years to enable a smooth transition.

The Government will also provide assistance for education of children of migrant families through the J&K Rehabilitation Council.

The State Government has proposed to provide 6000 jobs, for the educated among migrant youth, in the State Government service. To assist the State Government in providing such employment opportunities, the Central Government will bear the cost towards salary for about 3000 youth till they are absorbed against regular posts in the State Government, within the specified time-frame. Further, the Government is considering a financial package for other unemployed youth from among the migrant community to help them engage in self-employment through vocational training.

The migrant families who are engaged in agriculture and horticulture would require assistance to renew their occupation in the field. We will provide lumpsum grants for restoration of agricultural holdings and orchards which may have been lying abandoned.

We are examining the feasibility of waiving the interest on unpaid loans taken by Kashmiri migrants before their migration as part of a one-time settlement package.

The expenditure on all the above proposals is presently estimated to be around Rs. 1600 crore. These benefits will apply to all migrant families, who migrated bag and baggage after 1989, and have not been able to return to the valley. We hope that these measures will go a long way in bringing these families back home, and enable them to get back to a life of dignity and honour in the land of their forefathers where they belong.

Refugees from West Pakistan

We are conscious of the hardship that the refugees from West Pakistan have had to face because they are not considered to be permanent residents of the State. We have decided to work out a package for them.

Firstly, a dispensation is proposed to enable their children and grand children to seek admission in technical educational institutions in various parts of the country. Secondly, it is proposed to facilitate bank loans without security of land. A nodal cell will be set up by the

Union Ministry of Finance to deal with this matter. Thirdly, we will provide vocational training opportunities under the Skill Development Initiative Programme of the Government of India.

PoK Refugees of 1947

We have also examined the problems faced by the families who migrated from PoK to the State of J&K in 1947. On the recommendations of the State Government, we have agreed to meet an expenditure of about Rs. 50 crores to resolve cases of land deficiency or where it has not been possible to allot plots in urban areas to these families. With these measures no further assistance will be required from the Government of India. We expect that this will bring the problem of PoK refugees of 1947 to rest.

Problems of compensation for lands used for construction of Border Works

In respect of a large quantum of the lands on which various border works, such as ditch-cum-bunds, border fencing, etc., were constructed, compensation remains to be paid to the affected farmers. Time bound steps will be taken for payment of compensation as per the law.

We had also given directions that, wherever public premises related to essential public services like education, health, water supply, etc., are being used by the security forces deployed in the State, measures may be taken to relocate, and in the case of private property being so used, payment of adequate rent may be ensured. I am happy to inform the House that over the past year significant progress has been achieved in this regard.

With a view to further consolidate the confidence building initiatives already taken, it is planned to liberalise the entry permit system of cross LoC travel, by bringing in features like triple entry permits valid for one year and completion of the verification process within six weeks. We are also proposing early operationalisation of Kargil-Skardu and Jammu-Sialkot routes, and increasing the frequency of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot bus services to weekly from the present fortnightly. We will discuss these issues shortly with Pakistan. For convenience of travellers, applications for entry permit can be made at each District Passport Collection Centre. These measures will expand travel across the LoC and also enable wider cultural, academic, students and other exchanges. Trade and truck services across the LoC will also be operationlised."

RE. DEMAND FOR A CLARIFICATION FROM THE PRIME MINISTER—Contd.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): Now, we shall take up the matters raised with the permission of the Chair. Shri Shreegopal Vyas...*(Interruptions)*. Mr. Vyas, are you speaking? Otherwise, I will call the other Member....*(Interruptions)*.. .

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास (छत्तीसगढ़): महोदय ...(व्यवधान)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): Only what Shreegopal Vyas says will go on record. Nothing else will go on record....*(Interruptions)*... Are you speaking? ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री श्रीगोपाल व्यास: सर, आप कृपा करके माननीय सदस्य की बात सुनिए। यही मेरा आपसे निवेदन है। ...(व्यवधान)... हमारे जो माननीय सदस्य कह रहे हैं, उनकी बात आप सुनिए। ...(व्यवधान)...